

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Continued clamp down on freedom of expression, association and assembly, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, and still no access for international monitors**

#### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Turkmenistan***

Amnesty International welcomes Turkmenistan's acceptance of recommendations to guarantee freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly,<sup>1</sup> as well improvements to national legislation, including the 2012 law on political parties and the 2013 law on media freedom.

However, there has been no genuine attempt to guarantee these rights in practice. Journalists, human rights defenders and other activists continue to be subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and imprisonment after unfair trials. Turkmenistan has also failed to reform the registration process for non-governmental organizations and to allow them to work freely without harassment.

Two states called on Turkmenistan to provide information on the whereabouts of prisoners whose fate is unknown.<sup>2</sup> The organization is deeply disappointed, however, that Turkmenistan rejected these recommendations. Relatives of the disappeared have told Amnesty International that they have had no news of their relatives for over ten years, and do not know if they are dead or alive.

Amnesty International welcomes Turkmenistan's acceptance of recommendations to investigate torture and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT)<sup>3</sup> and notes the inclusion of a definition of torture in the Criminal Code in August 2012. However, the organization continues to receive reports that people suspected of criminal offences face torture and other ill-treatment in Turkmenistan. Complaints by victims are rarely if ever investigated, and impunity for the perpetrators prevails. There are also credible reports that practices, such as forced administration of medication, continue in prisons. Amnesty International calls on the authorities to carry out thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all complaints of torture or other ill-treatment and to hold those responsible to account.

Finally, while Amnesty International welcomes Turkmenistan's acceptance of recommendations to cooperate with the UN Special Procedures,<sup>4</sup> it is concerned that Turkmenistan severely restricts access to the country for international monitors. Amnesty International has requested access to the country several times; so far unsuccessfully.

#### **Background**

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/24/3, recommendations 112.59 (Czech Republic), 112.60 (Slovenia), 112.61 (Chile), 112.62 (Germany), 112.63 (Switzerland), 112.64 (Norway). Other recommendations were taken under considerations: 113.74-113.90 (United States of America, Canada, France, Poland).

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/24/3, recommendations 114.2 (Germany), 114.4 (Canada).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/24/3, recommendations 113.1-113.6 (Mexico, France, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Estonia, Montenegro, Romania), 113.58 (Czech Republic), 113.69 (United States of America).

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/24/3, recommendations 113.31-113.45 (State of Palestine, Slovakia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Iraq, Montenegro, France, Switzerland, Hungary, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia).

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Turkmenistan on 18 September 2013 during its 24<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Turkmenistan: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR61/006/2012/en/661b7a87-f445-4dab-b9db-af1c5531745b/eur610062012en.pdf>

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